

**Statement of
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Good morning, Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Casey Long and I am the Acting Director of the Office of International Affairs at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

I want to thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the outpouring of international assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and how that assistance was used. Before I begin my testimony, I would like to describe FEMA's Office of International Affairs (OIA) and the kinds of activities we normally undertake. The mission of FEMA's Office of International Affairs is to support DHS's international obligations and to execute FEMA's international agreements. We also execute international technical-assistance projects, facilitate participation in international training and exercises and support civil emergency planning efforts at NATO.

Thus, as the program office in FEMA designated to oversee international activities, FEMA's Office of International Affairs helped coordinate international assistance in the response to Hurricane Katrina. It is important to note that the United States had never before accepted international assistance on such a large scale as it did during Hurricane Katrina. After Hurricane Katrina hit, the outpouring of international aid was both heartwarming and beneficial, but it also created some difficult challenges.

One hundred fifty-one (151) nations and international organizations offered financial or material assistance. To coordinate and effectively use these offers, FEMA quickly developed a system with our Federal partners including the Department of State (DOS), which acted as the intermediary for offers of international assistance to the United States Government (USG) as required by the National Response Plan (NRP).

Today, I hope to explain to you the system that was developed and what we intend to do in the future, both for materials and cash-donation assistance. First, I would like to establish a timeline of what happened with international donations. Second, I would like to explain how we developed the system to handle international offers of assistance and the structure of that system. Finally, I would like to explain to you how FEMA and our Federal partners are working to formalize procedures to receive international assistance in the future.

Accepting Material Donations

After Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the United States, on Monday, August 29th, the USG received offers of assistance from governments and private organizations in Canada, France, and Honduras. On Tuesday, August 30th, Russia, Japan, NATO, and Venezuela also offered assistance. These offers ranged in nature from private citizens offering lodging, to offers of blankets, tents, and generators. On Wednesday, August 31st and Thursday, September 1st, the USG received similar offers to assist in relief efforts. Among the donors were countries such as

Australia, Belgium, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, the Netherlands and international organizations such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations.

On September 1st, the Administration indicated that the U. S. was accepting all offers of international assistance ‘in principle.’ Consistent with its role under the NRP, DOS’s Hurricane Katrina Task Force took on the duty of receiving offers of assistance from foreign governments and entities and communicating the acceptance/declination of these offers.

DHS and FEMA have the lead role in coordinating the Federal response to a major disaster. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, P.L. 93-288, as amended, gives FEMA the authority to request assistance from Federal partners to implement its disaster response. Accordingly, on September 2nd, FEMA turned to the agency that has diplomatic expertise working with the international community in a disaster context, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), and formally tasked USAID/OFDA to manage the logistics and operations of incoming international donations.

FEMA formally tasked USAID/OFDA for multiple reasons. First, as a signatory to the NRP, USAID is committed to the principles underlying the NRP and committed to support DHS/FEMA in responding to incidents of national significance. Second, FEMA has an ongoing working relationship with USAID/OFDA and recognizes USAID/OFDA’s excellent logistics capability. Third, FEMA tasked USAID/OFDA because they know the international emergency-management community. USAID/OFDA has a good understanding of the kinds of emergency supplies that may be offered by our international emergency partners. USAID/OFDA also works closely with major international relief organizations such as the United Nations.

On Saturday, September 3rd, FEMA convened the departments/agencies that were to play a role in accepting and distributing international donations. DHS, DHS/FEMA, DOS, USAID/OFDA, the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), DHS/Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the American Red Cross (ARC) met to discuss roles and responsibilities of each agency and to determine how the United States was going to accept and receive international material donations. The outcome of this meeting was a system for accepting commodities from international donors, which worked as follows:

- State Department was the focal point for receiving and responding to offers of assistance from foreign governments.
- USAID/OFDA worked with FEMA to determine whether specific offers were acceptable and could be used.
- When FEMA identified a potential requirement for something that could be addressed by an international donation, FEMA communicated acceptance and specifics for that offer.
- DOS communicated USG acceptance of the resource to the donor country.
- USAID/OFDA, along with DOD personnel at Little Rock Air Force Base, managed logistical operations for incoming international donations. A USG team, led by USAID/OFDA with representatives from CBP, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), was formed to receive international resources.

- When the resource was in-country, USAID/OFDA coordinated with FEMA in transporting it to the distribution point.

See Flowchartⁱ

Also on September 3rd, as FEMA worked with State and local officials to determine needs and how to fulfill these needs, FEMA provided DOS with a list of resources that FEMA might be able to use in disaster operations. Once USAID/OFDA stood up operations, they took over the function of matching needs to offers of assistance, obtaining resource specifications to help FEMA determine if they could use the donation, and communicating FEMA acceptances or declinations to DOS.

To facilitate the 24/7 FEMA operations, some USAID/OFDA staff members were physically co-located at FEMA headquarters. FEMA also asked USAID/OFDA to deploy to the Joint Field Office (JFO) in the affected region. This proved to be invaluable support for the logisticians and response providers at headquarters and in the field.

For all donations that the USG received in the U.S., DHS took precautions to ensure that they could be distributed and would not place extra burdens on response operations. However, despite our best efforts to quickly put together with DOS and USAID/OFDA a mechanism to manage material offers, it was difficult to rapidly integrate such a large quantity of foreign assistance into the ongoing disaster response. Some of these challenges included incidental goods being shipped along with accepted items; lack of specificity in qualifying USG acceptance; and a lack of understanding of the specifics of the offers.

Nevertheless, despite that the USG had never managed such a large quantity of international assistance before, the USG did successfully accept blankets, cots, tents, generators, school supplies, and other materials. Ultimately, USAID/OFDA distributed 143 truckloads of international donations to distribution centers in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

Accepting Cash Donations

Since additional decisions were needed to determine how to spend monetary donations, pledges of cash were handled under a different system. DOS received and retained donated funds in a DOS custodial account pending determination of use of funds. When it became apparent that donations of cash would be coming from foreign sources, FEMA identified an account that could be used to hold donated funds. FEMA also identified programs and needs that would not be eligible for FEMA assistance, but that could benefit from monetary donations.

An interagency group convened to discuss how foreign cash donations would be accepted and distributed. FEMA was invited to attend the Interagency Work Group and FEMA identified types of activities for which the donated funds could be used to address the needs of communities and individuals affected by the disaster, and the Work Group discussed parameters to appropriately use the funds.

On October 7, FEMA provided the Work Group a more detailed proposal for case management of disaster victims displaced by the Hurricane. Specifically, FEMA proposed that funds be provided to case managers who would assist disaster victims by identifying immediate needs and helping victims reach a level of self-sufficiency. Following interagency working group consideration \$66 million in cash donations was distributed to this case-management initiative.

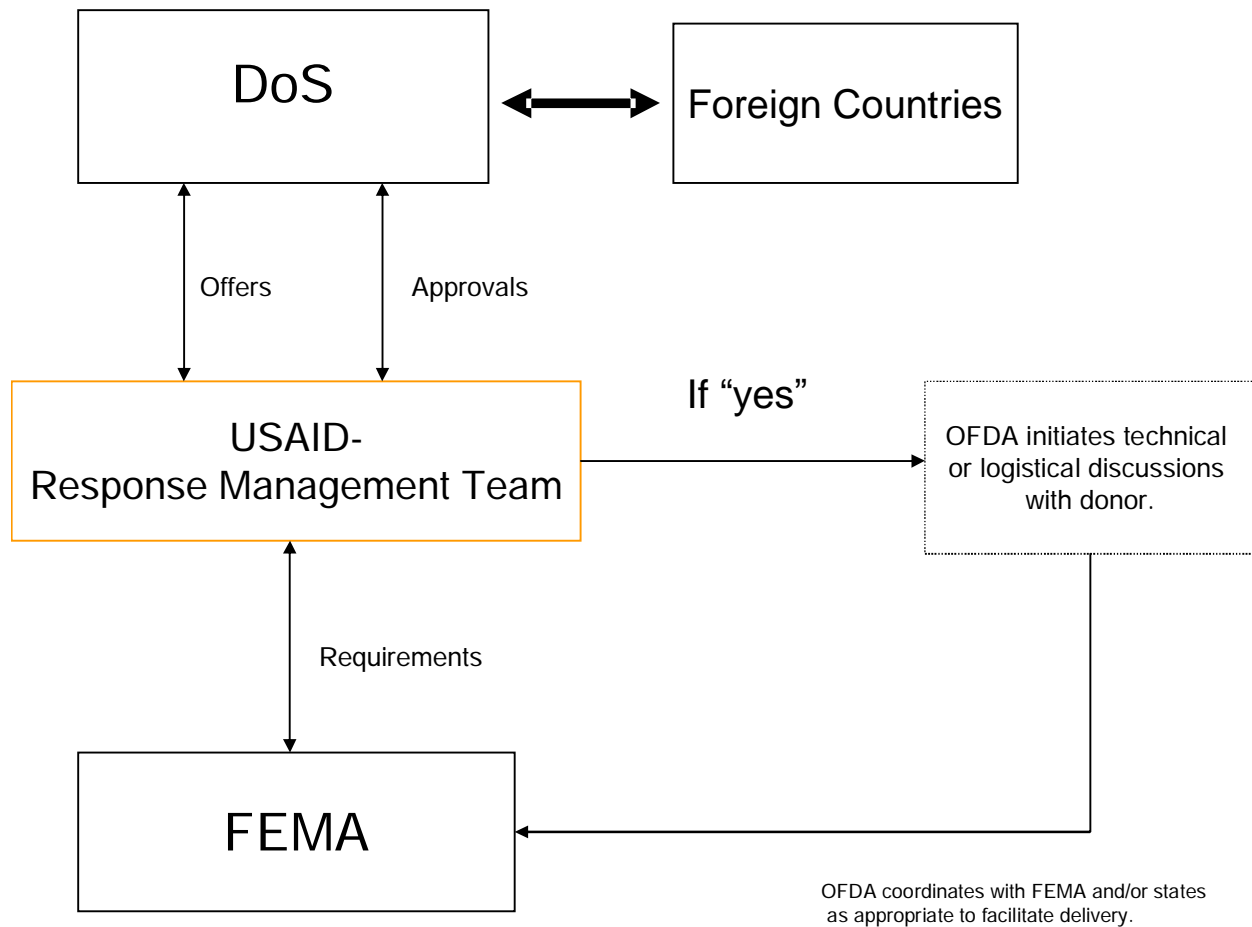
The Future of International Coordination

Beginning in November, as part of our after-action review of disaster-response efforts, FEMA initiated meetings of the departments and agencies that had participated in the receipt of international donations following Hurricane Katrina. Knowing that the next hurricane season was less than a year away, FEMA wanted to build on lessons learned during Hurricane Katrina and formalize a system to identify requirements and accept international offers of assistance so that valuable time would not be spent developing the system in the midst of future disaster response.

These meetings led to formalizing an interagency workgroup of the departments and agencies that participated in Hurricane Katrina's international donations effort. This working group has begun formalizing an international coordination system. Participants included components of DHS such as FEMA, CBP and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)/CIS (Citizenship and Immigration Services and other departments and agencies such as USAID, DOS, DOD, FDA, USDA, ARC, and the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE). Much progress has been made to develop standardized procedures to review and accept or decline international offers of assistance and to respond to international inquiries. By June 1st, and once approved by the Homeland Security Council, DHS expects to have an interagency system in place for coordination of international assistance offered in response to a catastrophic event in the United States.

I hope that my testimony serves this committee well. Once again, I thank you for having me here today. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Handling International Offers of Assistance



After “Yes”: Management of Incoming Assistance

